

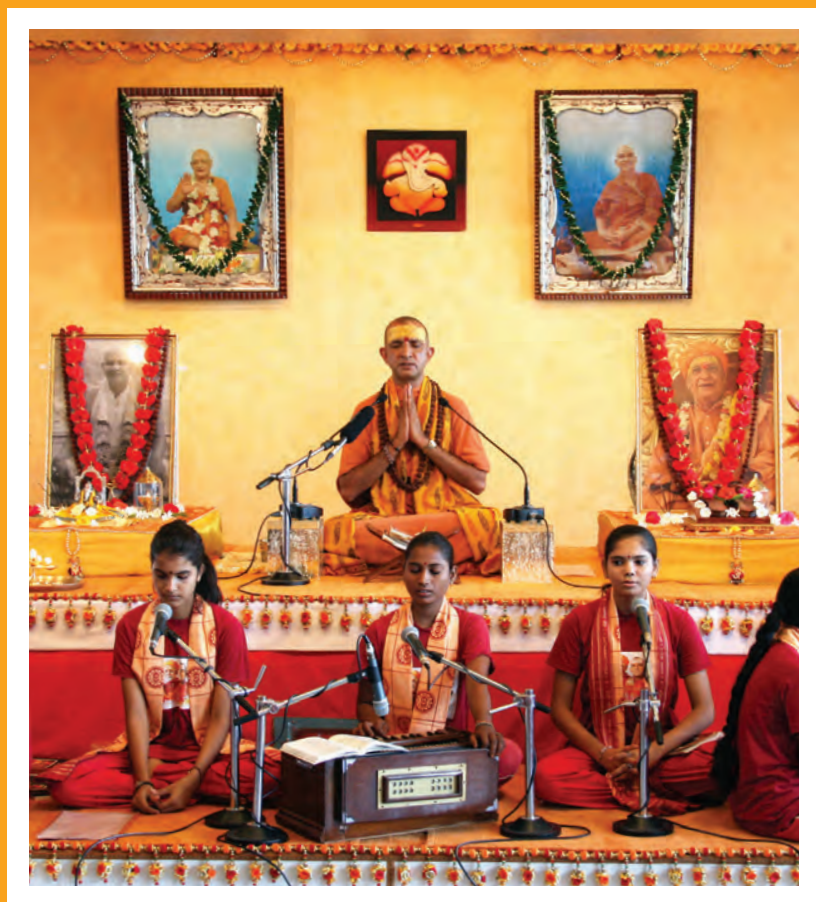
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Ganapati Aradhana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



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Ganapati Aradhana



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Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

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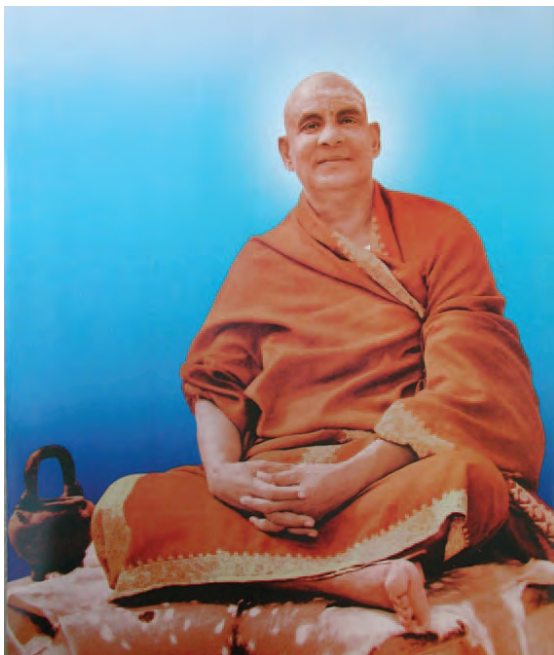
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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The Origins of Ganesha

16 August 2012

Within the culture, the spiritual tradition and the psyche of the civilization that developed in the Indian subcontinent, one yogi in particular has played a major role in the formation of belief systems, ideas and in the development of both spiritual concepts and the mind. This yogi is Shiva.

If you look at the now extinct ancient civilization and culture of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, you will find that the references and images of Shiva predominated the day-to-day environment, culture and life there. Many thousands of years have gone by, and yet the teachings of Shiva and Parvati continue to guide the spiritual journey of each and every aspirant. The Shiva and Shakti concept is not only a spiritual concept, but a real one as well. Some say that Shiva and Shakti are esoteric by nature, representing different powers and forces; this is the esoteric description or definition of the Shiva and Shakti concept. However, once upon a time they did walk the surface of this earth as human beings, in the form of yogis and siddhas. If you look at the collection of spiritual literature and traditions in both the Vedas and the tantras, there are ample references to Shiva and his family and the real concept of Shiva and Shakti.

In the tantric traditions there are five schools of tantra. The first is the Shaiva tantra, the teachings of Shiva. The second is Shakta tantra, the teaching of Shakti. The third is Ganapati or Ganesha tantra, the teaching of Ganesha, son of

Shiva and Parvati. The fourth is Saurya tantra, the teachings of the Sun god, and the fifth tantra is the Pancharatra tantra, the teachings of Narayana or Vishnu. These five schools of tantra constitute the entire body of tantric philosophy and practice, of which yoga is an integral part.

Journey to the land of Shiva

It is said that Shiva was a yogi who lived in isolation and passed his time in contemplation and meditation. By virtue of being a yogi, he was also a *siddha*, a perfect being. When people of such calibre come to earth, they come with a mission, which is aided by the cosmic powers. Shiva had a mission: the establishment of knowledge and virtue by which one can experience the evolution of human consciousness. To aid in this process, Shakti, the universal cosmic energy, also took form and became the power of Shiva.

Geographically, the abode of Shiva and Shakti is Mount Kailash; that is their summer house. When it is hot in India and the temperatures reach forty-five to fifty degrees, they go to their summer home at Kailash in Tibet. When it is cool in India and becomes freezing in Kailash, they come back to India and live in Varanasi. In the winter Shiva and Shakti live in Varanasi, and in the summer they go to their summer palace in Kailash.

It was in Kailash that Ganesha was born. In order to discover the link and the effect of Shiva, Shakti and Ganesha on the Indian psyche, civilization and the spiritual traditions, I took a pilgrimage to that holy place recently. During the journey, many things revealed themselves. Therefore, it is with the story of this pilgrimage that I begin the exposition on the subject of Ganesha tantra.

The journey begins

Our pilgrimage began from Delhi with eight people. Out of the eight, three were sannyasins and five were young people. As in the *Fellowship of the Ring*, in this fellowship of spiritual pilgrimage, eight people were chosen, and they were selected



for a reason and purpose, as I wanted this to be a spiritual pilgrimage and not a tourist trip to Kailash. The five young people represented the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. They represented the five lower chakras governed by the elements: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata and vishuddhi. The three swamis represented the higher tattwas: ajna, bindu and sahasrara.

From Munger we went to Delhi, from Delhi we flew to Kathmandu, from Kathmandu we crossed the border by road into Tibet. Prior to arriving in Tibet, we had undertaken extensive walking and climbing for a month or more to prepare our bodies: our lungs, our hearts, our physical bodies, so we could withstand the climb up to that high altitude. We were physically and mentally ready.

Once we crossed the border into China, our first stop was a town called Nyalam. Here, people are normally made to wait for two to three days to acclimatize to the rarefied atmosphere and high altitude, and to acquire mountain legs. However, all of us eight people were there only

overnight; we did not need any further preparation. We did not need any acclimatization. We were ready; the asanas and pranayamas helped.

Up in Tibet, the oxygen level is very low. At sea level, there is twenty-one percent oxygen in the air, but at the altitude of Kailash, high in the mountains, the oxygen level is only four percent. Breathing is not natural there. You have to be conscious of each and every inhalation and exhalation, taking a deep breath in and a deep breath out. Therefore, acclimatization is a must for everybody who goes there and is not a yogi. We had no problems, as we had made a rule that every hour on the hour we had to complete ten rounds of pranayama. We had to be conscious of every inhalation and every exhalation. Natural breath awareness would happen, without any effort.

After spending one night in Nyalam, which was the first halt, we continued on our journey to the second halting place, a Chinese military base, Sanga, beside the Brahmaputra river. Sanga is at an altitude of about 17,000 feet, more than 5,000 metres. After spending another night there, we continued our journey to the land of Shiva.

Divine waters of the Creator

The land of Shiva begins with the sight of a lake which is known as Mansarovar. The original name of this lake is *Manas Sarovar*, which means 'lake born from the mind'. *Manas* means mind and *sarovar* means lake: lake born through the mind. Whose mind? The Creator's mind, Brahma's mind. At an altitude of approximately 6,000 metres, it is a beautiful indigo-blue lake, glistening and sparkling in the sunlight, absolutely free of pollution. The water is so clear that when you look down into the depths, you can see the pebbles, the sand, the rocks, the fish. There is nothing murky or polluted about it. As waters used to be at the beginning of creation, so are the waters of Lake Mansarovar today.

It was from this point that we had our first darshan of Kailash. Mount Kailash rises from one side of Lake

Mansarovar and another mountain range, known as Guru Mandala, rises from the other side. The location of the three is symbolic, as in our life, Guru Mandala is ajna chakra, Mansarovar is bindu chakra and Kailash is sahasrara chakra. Thus, you see the three: the Guru Mandala range, the lake and Mount Kailash; ajna, bindu and sahasrara.

The incredible thing about Mansarovar is that it is full of animal life, insect life, reptilian life, bird life: everything besides human life. All different life forms are there. Mythologically, there are stories that describe Mansarovar as the location where golden swans live. While we were doing *parikrama*, or perambulation of the lake, people from my group were taking photographs of the flora and fauna found in Mansarovar.

One person focused his camera on a flock of birds floating on the water and took a picture. He showed it to me: “Swamiji, look, these are swans.” I looked at the picture, zoomed in, and there I saw two golden swans surrounded by white swans, as if they were the king and queen of that flock. That was the royal swan, the *rajahamsa* that mythology says has the ability to separate milk from water. If you mix milk and water together and give it to the *rajahamsa*, it will only drink the milk and leave out the clear water. I do not know whether it is true, but this is what is stated.

After completing the perambulation of the holy Mansarovar Lake, we went to another lake about 150 metres away, and what a contrast! This lake is also supremely beautiful; however, there are no life forms there, not even an insect, not even an ant! No animals go there, no birds fly over that lake; it is absolutely deserted and isolated. Traditionally, in the mythology of India, this lake is known as *Brahma Sarovar*, the lake of Brahma.

Lake of contemplation

The scriptures tell the story of Brahma being the Creator. In the process of creation, Brahma first created the five elements. From these five elements, he created the suns and



the planets. After creating these, he created trees, flowers, fruits, minerals, and so on; not the sentient creation, but the insentient creation. After creating the world, before creation of life forms, he meditated. Where did he meditate? At this spot, Brahma Sarovar. He meditated on Shiva and sought the grace of Shiva so that he could be successful in the creation of life forms. Up to this day, in that particular region of the lake, there are no insects, creepy crawlies, underground animals, over-ground animals, birds, nothing, as the place represents the original seat of Brahma.

Later on, when the tourists went there, they said, “Oh, Ravana did his penance here and he was a demon. No living being comes to this part as a demon has done his penance here.” I don’t believe that. Rather, I throw that theory out. Regardless of what his character, attitude and behaviour may have been, Ravana was not a demon. He kidnapped Sita, yes. Yet, Ravana was a *bhakta*, devotee, of the highest order. If you study the mythology of Shiva you will learn that it was to Ravana that Shiva gave darshan, not once, but several times. He was such a devotee that he sacrificed his ten heads and offered them to Shiva as a symbol of his surrender to that Shiva nature, Shiva consciousness. Therefore, in my books,

there is no greater devotee than Ravana. I am not talking about his character, actions or deeds, I am talking of his bhakti, and there has been no greater bhakta in this world than Ravana. People have referred to the lake of Brahma as *Rakshasa Taal*, the lake of the demon, but I am telling you the original story. It is not the lake of the demon; it is the lake of the Creator.

From Brahma Sarovar, we came back to the banks of Mansarovar. I decided that if ever again I go there for my anushtana or sadhana, I am going to live in the same place where Ravana lived. Of course, I will not become like him, but I will live in that place, as it is filled with the power of his tapasya and bhakti, more so than Mansarovar. That was my perception. The environment of bhakti prevailed there, not the environment of demonical nature, qualities and behaviour. If you go to a temple, everybody wants to play the role of a pious person. Even the worst debaucher in the world, the worst thief and robber, will become a bhakta in a temple. In the same manner, Ravana also became a bhakta. No matter what he was at home, there, in the dimension of Shiva, he was a pious person. He was a sadhaka and a bhakta to whom the Lord gave not one, but many darshans.

Darshan of devis and devatas

After returning, we occupied a lodge on the banks of Mansarovar and spent the night there. We had heard another mythological story, that in Mansarovar, gods and goddesses from heaven descend to take their bath. Prior to the journey, many people had told me that they had seen lights swimming on the surface of the water during full moon nights. Naturally, there was an inner curiosity as to whether or not we would see something at night. When we reached Mansarovar, however, even the Tibetans living there said, “No, there is nothing here. That time is gone, you cannot see anything.” I asked our guide, “Have you seen anything here?” He said, “Look, I come here about four or five times every season, but I have never seen anything. Maybe this is

only a myth, a story of a bygone age.” Thinking over the idea, we prepared to go to sleep.

Now, there are no private attached toilets or bathrooms in any lodge or hotel in Tibet. You have to go out in the field, in the freezing cold. At around nine-thirty, before retiring to bed, I decided to go out. When I came out of the lodge, the lake was in front of me, and what did I see? Six to eight lights in the water! I called everybody out, including our tour guide, and said, “Look! Look at all these lights.” They all came out with cameras. We stood out in freezing minus-five degrees for about an hour and half, just watching the lights play on the surface of the water. At one time, all of us saw one light descend straight from the sky into the water. It floated around in the water, disappeared and came up again, three times, as if diving. It then started hovering on top of the water and came towards us, stopping about fifty feet away. While my companions were preparing their cameras to take a shot of the luminous globe, it ascended up and disappeared.

We were able to take some shots, and when looking at those pictures later on, I discovered that the lights had two distinct colours: white and yellow. My companions asked me, “What is the meaning of these two colours?” I considered the question, and then realized that all the devas wear *pitambari* colour, yellow, and all the devis wear white. Therefore, the yellow lights represented *devata*, the male aspect of energy, and the white lights represented *devi*, the feminine aspect of the energy.

We were suffused with the darshan, and when it became too cold, we said, “Thank you very much for your darshan. Now we are going to sleep.” We came in and slept like babies after this beautiful, intoxicating and exhilarating darshan.

Majestic mountains

The next morning we took a bath in the freezing cold waters of Mansarovar. I made a rule that the five lower chakras, the five young people, had to do *sashtanga*, lie down flat in the water so the water would cover them completely. The three

higher tattwas would stand in the water and pour buckets of water over their own head. That is how we took our baths in the freezing waters of Mansarovar.

After that, we performed havan on the banks of Mansarovar. This was a major feat due to the lack of oxygen there. We put about half a kilo of camphor on wood, which was found lying here and there on the banks of Mansarovar. At that altitude, there are no trees, no wood; only pebbles, rocks and sand, and some grass-like shrubs growing in clumps at random in various places. We collected the wood left behind by other pilgrims, put half a kilo of camphor on it and lit the fire. It was a 'bonsai fire'. The maximum height of the flame was one inch. Nevertheless, we did a beautiful havan there and had an inspiring darshan of the gurus.

We then continued on our journey to Kailash, landing at the base camp, Darchen, and there we went to sleep. Before walking around Kailash, we had to cross a glacier. Beyond the glacier we had another darshan of Kailash which was incredible, as from this point not only Kailash, but also Nandi mountain and Ashtapada mountain are seen. Kailash is majestic white and triangular in shape, like a pyramid. In front of Kailash is Nandi, made of a massive block of black granite, looking exactly like a bull, like the vehicle of Shiva. From the back you can visualize the tail, the hump, the rump, the head, the horns; you can visualize each and every aspect of Nandi in this granite rock. It is as if, millennia ago, somebody had carved the image of a bull on this massive rock, which is as big as Ayers Rock in Australia. In front of Mount Nandi looms the majestic, white Kailash, and to the left of Kailash is Ashtapada Mountain, meaning the mountain of eight steps, and here we were eight people.

Mount Ashtapada is a holy place of the Jain community, the followers of Mahavira. In the Jain tradition there has been a lineage of twenty-four gurus. The first guru was Rishabhdeva, also believed to be an incarnation of Shiva. They say that the Ashtapada mountain is the place where Rishabhdeva attained spiritual siddhi. Therefore, it is an important place of

pilgrimage for the Jain community. They come here whenever they can. Like Mecca is for the Muslims and Kailash is for the Hindus, so is Ashtapada for the Jains. We sat down there, looking at these three mountains and imagining that once upon a time Shiva and Parvati, Ganesha and Kartikeya roamed this land. We then returned to our place of rest, which was the youth hostel, and spent the night there.

Visiting the lord of death

That night, I woke up three times. It was the night before we started on the parikrama of Mount Kailash. Each time I woke up, I experienced intense fear, trembling and sweating. I tried to analyze why I was experiencing this fear, why I was shaking, but I could find no logical reason. Each time I woke up, a mantra was going on in my head loudly: *Yamaroopi mahadevo dakshinasyam sadavatu.*

I woke up three times. The first time I awoke, I calmed myself and went back to sleep. One hour later, again I awoke; the same situation. Again I tried to analyze why, still could not figure it out, and went back to sleep. The third time I woke up, it was exactly the same situation; could not figure out why, went back to sleep. When we woke up in the morning, I called all the people in our group together and told them, “Today we are going to embark on our parikrama of Kailash, the abode of Shiva, and before we embark on this pilgrimage, let us invoke the protection of Shiva.” We all sat down and chanted the *Kavacham* and the stotras of Shiva, the protective chants, to provide ourselves with cosmic protection. After that, we travelled to the point from where our walking parikrama around Mount Kailash would begin.

At the place where the perambulation begins, there is a small temple dedicated to Yamaraja, the lord of death. Those of you who are versed in Indian lore and have studied the *Katha Upanishad* will know the story of Nachiketa. Nachiketa was a small boy who encountered the lord of death, and the lord gave him three boons. It was here at the location of this temple that Nachiketa had to wait three

nights before Yama, the god of death, appeared before him. The temple has two gates, one facing north and the other facing south. These gates are usually locked; nobody can enter, and nobody dares to enter, as they say that inside is *naraka*, hell, and Yama rules over hell.

According to the tradition of that location, people generally do one parikrama and pray outside to the lord of death, ‘Bring me back alive, safe and sound’, and then they go away. However, since I knew the story of Nachiketa, I said, “The three sannyasins shall walk around this place three times, complete three parikramas, while remembering the encounter of Yama and Nachiketa, and we shall ask for the blessings of Yama, as we are following the tradition of Nachiketa.” After the three perambulations were complete, I decided to enter the hell room. I climbed up the steps, found the door unlocked, opened it and went in. Inside, it was pitch-black, there was darkness all around. I stood there for a few minutes while my eyes adjusted to the dark. Then I looked around and saw skulls everywhere. Hanging from the ceiling were skulls of goats, yaks, even humans. On the



ground were more skulls and bones, and in one corner stood the image of Yamaraja. It was truly frightening. When it was dark I did not notice what was there, but when my eyes adjusted I saw something staring at me, just one foot away. I realized it was a huge yak face hanging from the ceiling.

I did pranam to Yamaraja and said, “I have come to your kingdom, now allow me to go out, do not keep me here. If I stay here, you will have a problem, as I will start teaching yoga to everybody!” Then I exited through the north gate. I had entered through the south gate and I went out through the north gate, victorious over death. At this spot, I hoisted the flag of Sannyasa Peeth, denoting that a sanniyasin had become victorious over death. This was a symbolic act. We then started on our journey.

Victory over death

After we had trekked for six kilometres or so, we stopped at one location to have some snacks. Behind me, the other members were following; some were struggling, some were fast and some were slow. I was the first one to reach the resting place. I sat down and opened my snack-bag, which contained just one apple. When the others began to arrive, one of my companions came and said, “Swamiji, do you know what happened down there near the place of Yama?” I said, “No, I went on ahead. I don’t know what happened.” He proceeded to tell me.

“One of the group members climbed on a horse, but the horse threw the person off. His one foot was caught in the stirrup so he could not free himself and the horse galloped around the huge field, dragging him behind it. By the time the horse owners and porters got there, this person had already been dragged behind the horse for three complete rounds of the field. When his foot finally got released, the horse came back to the man, stood up on its hind legs and tried to hit him with its front hooves three times. Three times the horse came back to kill this man.” At that moment I realized the meaning of the dream I’d had.

I had woken up three times, and the mantra which was going on in my mind was: “Lord Shiva, in the form of lord of death, stands at the southern end of the mountain.” This event occurred at the southern end of the mountain, where Lord Shiva takes the form of Yama, the god of death, and for this reason, intuitively the inspiration had come to do the *Kavacham* and the *Raksha* stotra, the mantras of cosmic protection.

About twenty minutes later, this man came riding up on the same horse, and I asked him, “What happened?” He replied, “Nothing.” No aches, no pains, no bumps; a little bit afraid, but not a single scratch on his body! He said, “Swamiji, do you know that my astrological chart says that I am to die before the age of fifty-five? And I turn fifty-five this year.” I said, “Now you will live beyond eighty. Forget that you are going to die, as that moment has passed.”

In Shiva’s abode, the land of darshans

The journey around Kailash begins from the south side, heads to the west and then continues on to the north side where the parikrama ends. When you look at Mount Kailash from the south, it looks like a house. You see steps, windows, doors formed in the rock, as if this were the residence of Shiva and Shakti. When you have a glimpse of Kailash’s western side, you see natural formations that look like elephants, horses, chariots and people standing in reverence, as if this were the *darbar*, the court of Lord Shiva, with people waiting to see, greet and meet him. If you see Kailash from the north, it looks as if layer upon layer of clouds have been placed on top of each other, like ripples in water. It is like waves rolling in, one after another; that is the impression of Kailash from the north.

During this parikrama as we walked, doing japa of our mantra, we saw Sri Swamiji, Lord Shiva and Swami Sivananda walking ahead in front of us. There were many such experiences, which were not only experiences, but actual darshans, as clear as I can see you now. In that manner and

form, I had also seen Hanuman; he travelled with us. I had seen Shiva and Shakti in physical form, Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda in physical form, Krishna and his consort, Rukmini, in physical form. It was the land of darshans and encounters with gods and goddesses.

There is no darshan of Kailash from the east side. The east side is like the family quarters where males are not allowed to enter, like the *rani vasa*, residence of the queens, in the old palaces, the area where only the females and children would live. This is the situation in Kailash too; on the east side there is Gauri Kunda where, according to mythology, Parvati takes her bath. You also see Chunchula Kunda, the place where the attendants of Parvati live and bathe. On the east side you also find two more mountains, Ganesha Parvata and Kartikeya Parvata, named after the sons of Shiva and Parvati.

Before arriving at the eastern side we had to traverse the highest pass, the Dolmala Pass, closest to the peak of Mount Kailash. On top of this pass the oxygen is only about three percent, and nobody is allowed to linger there for more than a minute. You have to keep walking and get down as fast as you can. However, at that point both Swami Sivaraja, who had accompanied me, and myself stayed for about ten minutes, breathing in the energy of Shiva from the peak closest to him. We gathered rocks and earth from the mountain there and hoisted the angavastra of Bihar Yoga and Satyananda Yoga as a flag to honour the tradition of Shiva.

Ganesha's birth

We then started our downward journey and came to Gauri Kunda, where I halted for a few minutes. My mind went back to the time when Parvati was taking her bath there and through her will, gave birth to Ganesha. Looking down at Gauri Kunda from above, I could well imagine Mother Parvati taking her bath, and I could visualize Ganesha standing there, staff in hand, guarding the area beyond which nobody could pass.

Shiva and Parvati have two sons, but they were not born of physical union; it was through her *sankalpa shakti*, willpower,



that Parvati gave birth to Ganesha. Kartikeya, Ganesha's brother, was born from the sankalpa of Shiva. Ganesha is therefore his mother's son, and Kartikeya is his father's son. According to mythology, Ganesha was created from the sankalpa shakti of Mother Parvati to be her helper, protector and son. Similarly, in order to help the devas vanquish their enemies, Shiva gave his *ojas* or vital power to Agni, the fire god. Agni could not hold the luminous ojas of Shiva, so he dropped it into the waters of the Ganga. At that time six women were bathing in the river, and they saw a beautiful boy emerge from the water. All the six said, "I am his mother," and they started fighting over the boy. Now, Kartikeya was Shiva's son. He miraculously grew six heads so that with each one, he could suckle the milk from each mother and satisfy

them all. I am telling you this to explain that Ganesha was Shakti's *manas putra*, or mind-born son, and Kartikeya was Shiva's *manas putra*.

The first encounter of Ganesha was a confrontation with Shiva. Shiva wanted to enter the private area where Parvati was taking her bath, and Ganesha stopped him. After a big fight, Shiva, in his anger, cut off Ganesha's head. When Parvati realized that her son was killed by Shiva himself, she became ragingly furious and took the form of Kali, ready to destroy the whole world. The gods came to pacify the devi, pleading with her not to destroy all of creation, and pleaded with Shiva to restore life to the dead son of Shakti.

Shiva was a yogi, a siddha, and the master of every science and art, including microsurgery. He was the first person to perform microsurgery, and did so on two people. One was Sati's father, Daksha, whose head was chopped off. Shiva brought him back to life by putting the head of a goat on his human body. The second was Ganesha. Shiva performed microsurgery on him by putting the head of an elephant on the body of the boy. After giving him this new life, Shiva also appointed him as the first god to be worshipped before embarking on any adventure, whether social or spiritual. Therefore, Ganesha is worshipped before we initiate any work or activity, and he is sitting here with us today.

Ganesha: link between the gross and the transcendental

The question arises as to whether or not Shiva knew who Ganesha was. Of course he knew. Remember one thing: Shiva and Shakti represent the eternal principles governing life, transcendental and subtle. Shakti had created the universe, but then a link had to be established between the gross universe and the transcendental, divine nature. This link could only be created by a son of Shakti, not by a son of Shiva, as the creator is Shakti. Shiva is only consciousness; Shakti is the creator, from the transcendental to causal, subtle and gross. Ganesha was created as the son of Shakti to link the gross with the transcendental.

Even in kundalini yoga, the deity of mooladhara chakra is Ganesha. Before you embark on your spiritual journey, you have to make Ganesha happy. Once he is happy, he will help you. You do not awaken your kundalini by bashing your mooladhara; you awaken your kundalini by invoking Ganesha in mooladhara. Once Ganesha appears, kundalini awakens.

Ganesha is also represented in the physical dimension, in the body. In the elephant-head of Ganesha you can see the beauty and cleverness of Shiva. Ganesha was born with a normal human head, and Shiva knew that if Ganesha was to fulfil a role and become a bridge between the material, the gross, and the transcendental, he could not function with a normal human mind. He needed to have a greater mind.

The elephant's greater mind

The elephant's mind and the elephant's head represent the *mahat tattwa*, the greater mind. That is the meaning and the significance of having the elephant's head; it denotes a person who is utilizing his mahat shakti. You are not utilizing your mahat shakti; you are utilizing only your manas shakti. *Manas shakti* is the finite, rational mind: thoughts, likes, dislikes, desires, aspirations. Everything that you have, face and express in your life is your manas shakti. You do not even apply your buddhi shakti, or your other shaktis. In your life, from birth to death, you only apply your manas shakti, the shakti of the finite mind. However, in Ganesha's case, as he is the master of the mahat element, he is the master of all four aspects of mind: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

In order to make him the bridge between the gross and the transcendental, Shiva had to perform the microsurgery on Ganesha, without which Ganesha would be totally irrelevant today. As a result of that mahat aspect of Ganesha, we regard him as the first god to be worshipped before embarking on any endeavour, adventure, project or sadhana, be it material or spiritual.

Ganesha, Master of the Mind

17 August 2012

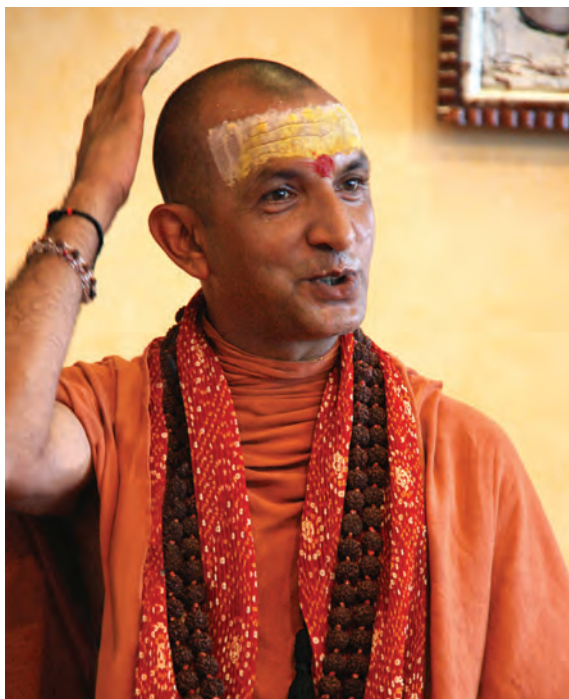
We started our journey of Ganapati aradhana by discovering what is represented by Ganesha. We took a trip to Kailash and learnt about the birth of Ganesha. Ganesha was born from the sankalpa of Shakti. He was not born from the union of Shiva and Shakti; rather, he represents the sankalpa shakti of the maternal power or force, the cosmic energy. Shiva also created a son from his will; not through a union, but by will. This son of Shiva is known as Kartikeya. Hence, Ganesha is the *manas putra*, the mind-born son of Shakti, and Kartikeya is the mind-born son of Shiva.

Purpose of Ganesha's birth

Why did Shakti create Ganesha? It was not because she wanted to have a son. Shakti created Ganesha to be her protector.

The two permanent *tattwas*, or elements, of Shiva and Shakti symbolize consciousness and energy, respectively. Consciousness is sentient and energy is insentient. Shakti creates the universe and all the insentient forms within the universe. When consciousness enters these insentient forms and they become sentient, this is known as the Shiva effect. Shakti remains insentient.

Shakti controls the dimension of the five elements, the *pancha tattwas*, the *pancha mahabhootas*: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. With the permutation and combination of these, she creates different universes, planets, stars, moons, suns



and galaxies. Shakti created this body composed of the five elements. That is the gift of Shakti. The realm of Shakti is manipulation, control and modification of the five tattwas, subtle and gross. Shiva's realm is more subtle than the five elemental dimensions; it moves into the level of mind and consciousness. It is the faculty of being aware of one's existence, of knowing that 'I am' and 'I exist'. That is the Shiva consciousness.

When you apply your faculties of mind, awareness or wisdom, you are using the Shiva tattwa within you. When there is no application of awareness, when there is no application of vision, you simply exist because you exist, this is the Shakti tattwa. Even if you are alive, in the absence of Shiva consciousness, that awareness and realization that 'I am' and 'I exist', the body will become insentient due to the lack of self-awareness and self-recognition.

In the absence of self-awareness, self-actualization, everything is insentient. When you sleep at night, it is the Shakti tattwa which becomes active in the absence of your awareness, and during the day it is the Shiva tattwa within you which is active, as you are interacting with everything, with the world around you, through your mind.

Since all the life forms of this planet have the faculty of consciousness, they spontaneously and naturally express the Shiva tattwa. We are living the Shiva tattwa all the time. We are using our faculty of consciousness, we are using our faculty of mind; that is the Shiva tattwa within us. Therefore, in mythology, all the created forms naturally follow Shiva. Shakti is quiet; she created and her role is complete. The difference between Shakti and Shiva can also be defined by a story that Sri Swamiji has told us, indicating the concepts governing the principles of Shiva and Shakti.

The story is of two people: one who is blind and the other who is lame. If we look at these two characters, the blind and the lame, what are their shortcomings? The blind one has no vision, that is clear, but she has the use of every limb. The lame one has no use of the legs; however, he has all the other faculties except the ability to walk or move. Sri Swamiji always says that the Shiva element is lame; it cannot walk, but it can see. It can become the observer, it can become the *drashta*, the witness of everything. However, by itself it cannot perform any other function except that of awareness.

The Shakti element, on the other hand, is blind. It cannot see, but it can perform all activities and work with the guidance of Shiva. It can move, it can travel great distances, it can use the arms; the only thing it does not have is the sight, the vision, the awareness. Even in this story, Shakti is insentient: it has no awareness, no vision, no sight, and Shiva is sentient: it has the awareness, but no motion. In order for life to spring forth, these two have to come together.

Shiva has to ride on the shoulders of Shakti and guide Shakti where to go. A lame man can sit on the shoulders of a blind person and direct the blind person to head towards

a particular destination. Shiva and Shakti function in the same manner. When Shakti created this cosmic power, when she created the universe and the different life forms, Shiva infused these life forms with consciousness and then all the created beings became filled with the Shiva tattwa.

One day, Shakti, who is symbolized as the consort of Shiva, said to herself, 'I have no one to serve me. Everything that I create Shiva captures, and they become his followers, adherents of his path. I need somebody who can serve me.' Through her will, she created the human form of Ganesha. As Shakti is insentient, any offspring or creation of Shakti will also be insentient.

The fight between Shiva and Ganesha

The first duty that was given to Ganesha after creation was, "My son, take this staff, stand at my door and guard it. Nobody should enter my quarters." This was the order, the mandate that Shakti gave to her son. Ganesha stood there at the gates of Shakti's palace in the form of a twelve-year-old boy. Shiva walked up and wanted to enter the quarters of Shakti, but Ganesha put the staff in front of him and said, "You cannot enter." Shiva was surprised. Naturally, Ganesha did not recognize Shiva, as he was a boy without awareness or consciousness. Shiva thought, 'Who is this boy who does not know who I am?' He asked the question to Ganesha, "Do you know who I am?"

Ganesha simply said, "I do not know who you are, I only know that you cannot enter these quarters." Shiva then became angry and a big fight ensued between Ganesha and the armies of Shiva. Ganesha, being infused with the powers of Shakti, was able to vanquish them all. This made Shiva even angrier, 'How can this mere boy vanquish my entire army?' He took up his trident and pierced it through Ganesha's throat, killing him and separating the head from the body.

Upon hearing the commotion outside, Parvati came out and saw her son lying on the ground beheaded, by no one other than her consort, Shiva. Parvati became furious and

manifested in her form of Kali, ready to destroy and devour all the created worlds. At that moment, all the devas and rishis intervened; they pacified Shakti, the cosmic force. They said, “Mother, be pleased with all of us and do not be angry. What has happened has happened for good.” They supplicated, calmed and quietened her, and then went to Shiva and said, “You have to save us. Shakti is in her real form now, ready to destroy and consume everything if this son of hers does not come back to life. Shiva, you are the only microsurgeon here who can perform this feat, so please bring the son of Shakti back to life.”

Shiva gave the order to his followers: “Go in the north direction and find me someone’s head: a human, animal, bird, doesn’t matter who, just someone born at the same time as Ganesha.” Shiva’s followers spread all over the world in the northern direction and searched high and low for a birth that had taken place at the same time as Ganesha, but they could not find anybody. They returned empty-handed except for two followers who continued their walk and went far. Eventually they found a mother elephant sleeping on the ground with her newly-born calf. When they made the horoscope of the baby elephant, they discovered that it was born at the exact time that Ganesha was given life in Kailash. They said, “Well, this is the only choice now,” and they took away the head of the baby elephant and brought it to Kailash. Shiva performed his microsurgery and stitched the elephant head on to the human body of the boy and gave him life.

Shiva’s boons to Ganesha

Parvati said, “Not enough. You have performed a great injustice. You have to give him something more. I am not going to be satisfied just by him coming back to life. Give him something more.” Shiva and all the other devatas said, “We shall all give him some of our attributes and powers, and we shall call him Ganesha.” *Ganesha* means ‘ruler’, *gana* means group or hosts, a group of people, and *isha* means master, controller, regulator, guide. Therefore, with the

blessing of the devas and Shiva, the boy became Ganesha, he who controls all the life forms and ganas, all the groups: the celestial, the cosmic, the divine, the human, the gross, the material, the physical and the lower life forms, the demonical.

Shiva then told him, “You shall create obstacles for the wicked and you shall also remove obstacles for the pious.” This became the primary function of Ganesha, as his first act was to block the entry of Shiva and create an obstacle before him. Thus, Shiva gave him the boon: “You shall become the remover of obstacles, but at the same time you shall also be able to create obstacles.” With these powers, Ganesha became the first god to be worshipped before embarking upon any endeavour or effort, whether social, gross, material or spiritual. This is the mythology. Now we come to the description of his function.

Removal of the seeds of conditioning

When Shakti created Ganesha, she created him in human form, and human beings, or anything created in this universe, live a conditioned existence. Earth is a conditioned



existence; it is a conditioned expression of the cosmic power. Fire is a specific, conditioned expression and experience of the cosmic power, as are water and air; all the elements are predefined, conditioned expressions of the cosmic power, including human beings, insects, an ant, a bacterium, an amoeba. This is because everything is contained in, composed and created by the five elements, and what is created by the five elements is always conditioned. You are conditioned; your mind is conditioned.

Normally, people say that the mind is conditioned by the influences of society, culture, religion, and so on. However, this type of conditioning occurs after you are born. Before birth, the mind is conditioned by the 'tamasic curse'. No matter where people are born, they all have the same physical structure. Babies born in Russia, China, Australia, India, Japan or England all have generally the same physical structure: two arms, two legs, the head, the eyes, the nose, the ears, everything is the same. Sometimes nature throws in different colours, but the form is the same. Just as you are born with a specific form of body, you are also born with a specific nature and quality of mind. That nature and quality is tamasic; the conditioned mind, the shaped mind, the formed mind which is able to interact in this material dimension. Ganesha was born with such a conditioned mind.

Shiva was concerned: 'How can Shakti create a life form without my input? How can Shakti create a form which has the absence of consciousness in it?' He said, 'All right, I shall make good use of this form of Shakti's.' However, in order to make good use of the form created by Shakti, he had to make some modifications. He said, 'How can this son of Shakti, who will be identified as my son also, remain as a normal, worldly, common person, a conditioned being? Something has to change.' By chopping off his head, Shiva actually removed the seeds of conditioning from Ganesha and prepared the way for Ganesha to be regenerated with a higher quality of consciousness. This higher quality of consciousness is symbolized by the elephant's head.

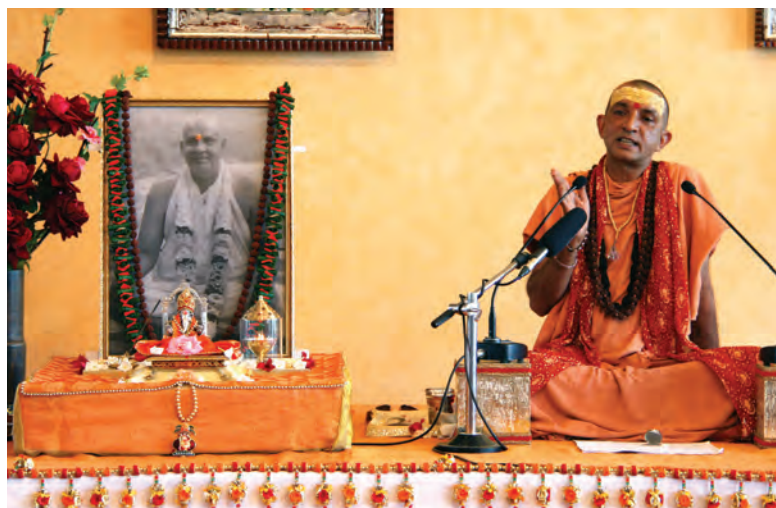
Symbolism of the elephant's head

An elephant is an animal with an active memory. Other animals and birds do have memories, but these memories are short-term and fleeting. They see something and then they forget about it, but an elephant remembers for a long time to come. It has a big head with a big capacity to remember; the natural ability of the elephant is its memory. It has a better memory than human beings.

What is contained within memory? Contained within memory are all the impressions from the beginning of time and creation, until today. All these impressions are retained. Therefore, when Shiva placed the head of an elephant on Ganesha, Ganesha became the master of time; he had all the memories from the beginning of time and creation until the present day. In this way, Ganesha became the master of time.

As Ganesha was born of Shakti, and was later modified by Shiva, Shiva also made him the master of matter. He said, "Your duty is to serve and protect Shakti; do not allow anybody to access Shakti." In kundalini yoga, mooladhara is the seat of kundalini. Mooladhara is the seat of Shakti, where she is lying dormant, and Ganesha is the doorkeeper of mooladhara who does not allow anyone to enter mooladhara. No matter how much you may jump up and down, trying to awaken your mooladhara, nothing is going to shake Ganesha. He is solid as earth there; you will not move Ganesha at all. That is the reality.

Ganesha also represents the *mahat tattwa*, the greater mind. According to the yogic principles, the greater mind is composed of four expressions: *ahamkara*, the ego principle; *chitta*, the archetypal memories; *buddhi*, the gross intellect; and *manas*, the thinking, interactive, rational mind. In your life, you are using only the faculty of manas. Buddhi and chitta are used much less, and ego is the underlying foundation of your life. However, in the case of Ganesha, he uses all the four faculties with the same ease and effectiveness. Therefore, he is the master of the mahat tattwa, the greater mind.



Ganesha in the brain structure

About fifteen years ago, a Lebanese scientist photographed different images of the physical brain from different directions. As he was looking at these impressions of the brain, he discovered that you can physically observe various shapes and images in the brain. At first he could not understand what they represented, and then he discovered that they were images of deities and devatas. He searched for Ganesha and discovered him in the brain stem.

At the point where our spinal cord enters the brain, there is a small section which is known as the medulla oblongata, which is a part of the cerebellum, the primitive brain. Above the medulla oblongata/cerebellum is another part of the brain, the cerebrum, the logical, intellectual brain. When viewed from below, or 'ventrally' in anatomical terms, this logical, intellectual brain with the primitive brain and brain stem sitting below it forms the shape of Ganesha. You can see it for yourself; find the ventral image of the brain in any book on anatomy and physiology, and then superimpose the image of Ganesha upon it. You will see that it is an exact replica of Ganesha's head.

Ganesha allows one to move from the level of primitive existence into a higher existence of knowledge, and that is the function of Ganesha, both in mythology and in life.

The medulla oblongata/cerebellum is the seat of Ganesha in our body, and it is also associated with ajna chakra. According to kundalini yoga, ajna chakra is the controller of mooladhara chakra. In Sri Swamiji's book, *Kundalini Tantra*, he mentions clearly that to awaken mooladhara and the energy inherent in mooladhara, you must first work on ajna chakra. Ajna chakra is the switch and mooladhara is the bulb. Just as a light bulb is activated by a switch on a board located far from the light, the activation of mooladhara and the awakening of kundalini occur when you are able to activate your ajna chakra.

Ajna chakra is the seat of guru. It is guru in ajna chakra that commands Ganesha in mooladhara, "Ganeshaji, open the gates. This aspirant wants to get in, to have darshan of Mother Kundalini." Ganesha enables the jump from the primitive brain to the transcendental brain, the higher brain, the higher mind and access to the kundalini shakti. The journey into the dimension of shakti is achieved by propitiating him. This is the theory of kundalini yoga.

Propitiating Ganesha

The three areas that Ganesha governs are time, matter and memory. He is also the doorkeeper of the brain stem, and as doorkeeper, he must ensure that nothing bad or negative enters. He is there to block the negative from getting inside the head; however, you do not recognize his work and you ignore his warnings. When you ignore his warnings, he comes back and creates problems. You have heard of the word 'conscience'; when you do something wrong, who is it within you that tells you what you have done is incorrect? You say, "My conscience is telling me I should not do this." What you call your conscience is actually Ganesha inside you telling you not to do that. It is that faculty of Ganesha which you call conscience, which makes you aware of the right and the wrong.

Therefore, in order to propitiate Ganesha, you need to have right thinking, right performance and right behaviour. By thinking in the right manner, acting in the right manner and behaving in the right manner, *sadvichara*, *satkarma* and *satvyavahara*, you are able to manifest the powers of Ganesha in your life. *Sadvichara* is right thinking, appropriate thinking. *Satkarma* is right action, appropriate action. *Satvyavahara* is the right attitude and behaviour, the appropriate attitude and behaviour. When you are able to incorporate these three things into your day-to-day living, Ganesha comes alive within you.

Being the doorkeeper of life, Ganesha ensures that nothing bad or negative enters your life. If something bad comes along, he will create obstacles to stop it from getting in, and if some negativity has to be overcome, he will remove the blocks, the obstacles and allow it to go out. These are the two functions of Ganesha; to create blocks, not for your harassment, but to stop the negative from entering into your life, and to remove blocks so that the bad can leave your life. Therefore, he is called *Vighnaharta*. *Vighnaharta* means ‘the remover of obstacles’ and then Ganesha is the maintainer of peace.

Ganesha’s marriage

Ganesha and his brother Kartikeya lived in Kailash. The son of Shiva, Kartikeya, is depicted as having six heads, and the son of Shakti, Ganesha, is depicted with an elephant head. Kartikeya was created by Shiva to help the gods win their fight against the demonical forces and powers. The six heads of Kartikeya represent the five elements and one mind. The five elements and mind represent a person who is actively involved in this world, who is subject to all the emotions and who can identify with the world. Your character is not like that of Ganesha; rather, you are like Kartikeya. You also have six heads: the five sensorial heads and one mind, the mental head. Each head tries to prove its supremacy over the others. Each sense organ tries to prove its supremacy, the mind tries to prove its supremacy, and the

result of them all trying to outdo each other and prove that they are bigger, better and most supreme is total confusion and distress for the human being.

Kartikeya was created to fight the demonical forces. If devas represent the transcendental and cosmic powers, the demonical forces represent the gross and detrimental powers of life. Kartikeya has to be in the middle, to vanquish these demonical powers and to support and encourage the establishment of the divine powers. Therefore, Kartikeya is seen as utilizing his powers and abilities of the senses and the mind, whereas Ganesha represents a being who is equally at ease in all the expressions of consciousness, of the mahat tattwa. Ganesha is calm and composed. Kartikeya can become volatile, just as you all can become volatile when something does not happen according to your expectation in life.

These two brothers lived happily with their parents in Kailash, and they grew up together. When they reached the marriageable age, Shiva and Parvati received a proposal for marriage from another king who had two daughters, and they were beautiful. Shiva informed his sons, "Listen, I have received this marriage proposal. Do you want to marry?" Both sons nodded their head in the affirmative: "Yes, we want to get married." Living in the mountains is solitary, of course one needs companionship. If you live in society, surrounded by many, you can avoid getting married. However, if you are living in the mountains, totally isolated and far away from every kind of human interaction, then marriage seems like a necessity. It is not a necessity; it seems like a necessity. Ganesha and Kartikeya both agreed. They said, "Yes! Wonderful idea. New people will come into our home."

Shiva started to think, 'Marriage is okay. However, Kartikeya is volatile and human. If he marries, he may not live happily ever after with his wife and he will not be able to do justice to the family.' Shiva said, 'Okay, I will let destiny take its course.' Of course, he was also the manipulator of destiny. He had a chat with the rishis who then came upon a plan. The plan was that they would ask the two sons, Ganesha

and Kartikeya, to travel around the earth, three times, and the first one to complete the journey and return to Kailash would qualify to marry the princesses.

Kartikeya was very happy when he heard the news, as he had a small Cessna. The form of his Cessna, his plane, was a peacock. His vehicle was peacock: a single-seater Cessna. He said, "With my Cessna, my peacock, I can fly around the world three times quite easily," landing from time to time to refuel.

Ganesha's vehicle, on the other hand, was a rat. In Kailash there are huge rats. They are not like the rats of Munger, the four-inch ones, but are twenty-four-inch rats. Ganesha looked at his twenty-four inch rat and said, "He's big, bigger than all the rats of the world, but I don't think he can complete the journey around the world in three days. What to do?" You have to remember that Ganesha is the master of the higher mind, so suddenly, an idea flashed in mind and he became relieved and stress-free. He went to his room, lay down on the bed and went to sleep.

The next day, Shiva fired his gun and said, "Let the race begin!" It was the first two-man race around the world. As soon as the gun was fired by Shiva, Kartikeya sat on his peacock and flew into the blue sky. Ganesha called out from his room, "Coming in a few minutes!" He came out of his room with his backpack filled with his clothes, toothbrush, toothpaste, combs, hair oils and shampoo; everything that is required for a journey. Carrying this heavy backpack, he sat down on his rat. The rat collapsed under the weight. Ganesha said, "Not good enough!" However, before embarking on his journey he said, 'Well, I'll go and do pranam to my father and mother. They are in the inside quarters.'

Ganesha walked into the quarters where Shiva and Shakti were seated and said, "Father and Mother, I am ready to go around the earth three times, but before I go, I want to worship you." Father and Mother became very happy. They said, "The first son simply flew off without even saying goodbye to us, but this son of ours has come to worship us before he embarks on the journey." Ganesha did



his pooja. He worshipped Shiva and Shakti, offered them flowers, incense and lights, and then did three *parikramas* or perambulations around them, picked up his backpack and said, “Now I’m going. Bless me.” Shiva and Shakti both raised their hands in blessing, and Ganesha walked out of the room. However, instead of going to the racetrack, he went back to his room, put his backpack down, lay down in his bed and fell asleep.

That evening at dinner time, Shiva and Parvati sat alone at the dining table. Parvati looked a bit dejected. Shiva asked, “What happened?” Parvati said, “I’m missing my sons. Kartikeya, he can fend for himself. He’s the commander-in-chief of the celestial army and he can take care of himself, but Ganesha, the little chubby one, I don’t know how he’s going to survive without food. I did not see a refrigerator in his backpack, so I seriously doubt whether he will survive his journey around the earth, and I’m feeling very sad. I am missing Ganesha.” Shiva said, “Well, if you are missing Ganesha then why don’t you go to his room and spend some time there? Live your memories, and then come back and have your meal.” Parvati said, “Good idea,” and she went

into Ganesha's room, and lo and behold, there was Ganesha sleeping on his bed!

She stood there, wonderstruck: 'What happened? Is Ganesha not interested in marriage? Did he not go on this race around the earth?' She shook Ganesha, woke him up and said, "You are sleeping here?" Ganesha said, "Mother, when I came out after the worship, I was exhausted, so I decided to rest before embarking on the journey. Now that you have woken me up, I am hungry. Give me something to eat." His Mother said, "All right, come with me to the dining table," and she took Ganesha, holding his hand, to the dining table where Shiva was seated. Shiva feigned surprise and said, "Ganesha? You are here? What happened? Your mouse could not carry you and your backpack?" Ganesha said, "Father, don't make fun of me. To tell you the truth, I have gone around the world three times. I've already done it!" Shiva said, "What do you mean? Kartikeya is only twelve hours into his journey around the world. You did not even leave Kailash and yet you say you have completed your journey. How is that possible?"

Ganesha said, "Father and Mother, you are both givers of knowledge. You have given all the sciences and philosophies to the people of the world. You have given them the tantras; you have given them every kind of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. You yourselves have written in the scriptures that father and mother, together, represent the earth, as it is you who have given birth to us. It is you who have nourished us. It is you who are nurturing us! You are our earth, and I have gone around you three times. I have completed my perambulation." Shiva smiled and said, "When do you want to get married?"

Ganesha said, "Why delay? Tomorrow morning." That night all the arrangements were made, and in the morning Ganesha was married to these two beautiful princesses. One was called Riddhi, and the other was called Siddhi. *Riddhi* means material prosperity and *siddhi* means spiritual prosperity. Thus, Ganesha was married to both material prosperity and spiritual prosperity.

Kartikeya's anger

When Kartikeya returned to Kailash after completing his journey around the earth, he went to his parents and said, "I have completed my journey." Shiva asked him, "On your trip, did you happen to see Ganesha? How far he has gone?" Kartikeya answered, "No sir, I could not locate him. I don't know where he is. He must be lost somewhere, or his rat might have died on the way from carrying the weight of Ganesha." While he was saying this, the side door opened and Ganesha walked in, followed by his two beautiful wives. Kartikeya looked in that direction and flared up: "What is this? How did Ganesha marry the two princesses, and when?" His mother told him, "Yesterday morning; the second day." Kartikeya said, "That's impossible. How could Ganesha complete the journey around the earth in twenty-four hours when in my Cessna it took me seventy-two hours to fly around the world?"

Shiva said, "Due to his better intelligence." This was something that Kartikeya could not swallow. He said, "I have been cheated and now I am not going to live in Kailash with you."

Kartikeya left Kailash and went to the south of India. On top of a mountain called Krauncha he established his hermitage and in association with other ascetics, lived the life of a sadhu, propagating the path of sannyasa. He propagated the path of renunciation. He propagated the path of isolation, seclusion and sannyasa. Even today, the teachings of Kartikeya are guidelines for sannyasins on how to live, think and act.

Division of territory among Shiva's family

Kartikeya's life changed and Ganesha remained in Kailash. However, Shiva and Parvati felt a bit dejected that one son had left them, so they went to Kartikeya and supplicated him, "Return to the mountain." Kartikeya said, "No. I have made a choice, I have made a decision and I am going to abide by that decision. If you want, stay here with me, but I

am not going back to Kailash.” When Kartikeya said, “You stay here with me,” Shiva and Parvati stayed in Krauncha Parvata, in the form of the jyotirlinga that came to be known as Mallikarjuna. The temple of Mallikarjuna is in Sri Sailam, the seat where Kartikeya went and established his ascetic ashram. This is where Shiva and Shakti lived with Kartikeya.

When the time was right, Shiva said to Kartikeya, “You propagate the teachings of renunciation and asceticism in the South of India. That is your mission.” To Ganesha he said, “You go to the western part of India and control and govern that region.” To Shakti he said, “You go to the eastern part of the country and govern there.” For himself he kept the northern part and governed that region. Even today, Kartikeya, in the form of Murugan, is worshipped in South India as the primary deity. In western India, for example in Maharashtra, Ganesha is worshipped as the primary deity. In eastern India, Kamakhya and other places, it is Shakti who is worshipped as the primary deity. In the North of India, it is Shiva. That is how they pervaded the psyche of the civilization that grew in this subcontinent.



The wheel of life

The symbol of Ganesha is the swastika. What is the meaning of the swastika? The swastika is made up of four lines that cross each other, and they rotate. That is the wheel of life. The four lines that cross each other represent the four *purusharthas*: *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*. The effort to attain social security and prosperity is *artha*; the effort to fulfil one's expectations and desires is *kama*; the effort to live a virtuous life is *dharma*; and the effort to transcend the limited self is *moksha*. These are the four predetermined efforts of life, and once upon a time people did follow these four *purusharthas* in sequence. Today, people are following only two *purusharthas*: *artha* and *kama*. Fulfilment of desire and satisfaction is primary, as well as safety, security and prosperity. This is the effort.

You people may be exceptions, you who are thinking about what *dharma* is and how to attain some glimpse or experience of *moksha*. Nevertheless, 99.9 percent of the population does not think of *dharma* and *moksha*, they think of *artha* and *kama*. Ganesha represents the four efforts, the four attempts at attaining completeness, wholeness and fulfilment in the physical, material dimension in addition to the spiritual, transcendental dimension. The two efforts of *artha* and *kama* lead to completeness and fullness in the material dimension, and the two efforts of *dharma* and *moksha* lead to attainment and fulfilment in the spiritual dimension. This is what is represented in the swastika.

If you follow the path of *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha* in a balanced and harmonious way, you receive the grace of the consorts of Ganesha: the material prosperity as well as the spiritual prosperity. If you do not follow this system and are caught up in one aspect, either *artha* or *kama*, you do not receive the grace of the consorts of Ganesha. You do not get the material prosperity or the spiritual prosperity. You are caught in a rat race. Just as a rat in a lab moves in his wheel, you are also moving in your own wheel in this cosmic lab.

Vedic Ganapati Aradhana

Achieving Mastery over the Limiting Conditions of Life

18 August 2012

Aradhana means worship: the worship, invocation and realization of the higher nature that is within all of us. One strives to attain this by trying to understand the spiritual concepts that govern life, by singing mantras, chanting stotrams and connecting with a different state and frame of mind in which joy, contentment and happiness are experienced. This sustained experience of joy, contentment and happiness is the beginning of spiritual awareness.

Whenever you are happy and free of mental problems, whenever you are content and have no cause of discontentment in life, whenever there is joy and no sorrow within, then that state of mind is able to lead you to the realization of your own spiritual nature. Your material nature, your gross nature, is subject to the influences of the environment, society, people and the world. Due to these influences that affect the mind constantly and continuously, the colours of the mind keep on changing. Whatever the colour of the mind, you begin to perceive the world in that colour as well. When there is happiness, contentment and joy, you connect with the aspect and the energy of luminosity, *jyoti* or light, and illumination.

The energies that uplift the human mind are known as devatas and devis. This energy has two principles: the masculine principle and the feminine principle, the positive pole and the negative pole. The positive aspect is known as *deva* and the negative as *devi*. Do not take the words 'positive'

and 'negative' literally as good and bad; rather, understand them to be two poles of the same energy. Just as there is day and night or plus and minus, in the same way, there is deva and devi. Both are in coexistence; one cannot exist without the other.

Traditionally, Indians have believed that devas and devis could actually materialize. It was much later in the course of history and time, when missionaries from different cultures and religions came to this country that the thought that God is only a concept and not a reality was put into people's minds. This is what religions have professed until today, that God is a concept, an idea and not a reality.

In India, we did not believe that God is an idea; we did not believe that God is a concept. We believed that God is real; we believed that God is transcendental with the ability to manifest in the gross dimension as well. Consequently, we understood God as omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. This God quality, this God nature, this God consciousness has to perform different roles at different times in human life. It is not different from human existence; human existence is an integral part of the God-consciousness. This is what yogis visualized and realized in the higher states of meditation. They said that the presence of God, that divine nature, the transcendental nature and quality, the higher virtue, can be invoked and experienced in one's own life. This was the start of spiritual awareness and spiritual understanding in the Indian psyche.

In the course of time, the sages and seers of the tradition also identified different qualities and functions of energy, in relation to the mind, the senses, people's interactions in the world, ego, emotions, in relation to every dimension of human experience. All these forces and powers, these energies were given a name, and these names represented different manifestations of this cosmic power, the Godly power. What many people today call devis and devatas, gods and goddesses, are not just residents of an imaginary heaven; rather, they are realities of human life.

Ganesha as a benevolent force

I have told you stories of Ganesha. First, the story of his birth, as that defines what his function was to be in the future; and then the story of his marriage, as that defines what he is able to provide you with. The symbolism of Ganesha is clear: a chubby god with an elephant's head who enjoys the beauty of life, who enjoys good clothes, who likes to eat good food, who always brings auspiciousness in life and who is a benevolent force that, when invoked, can help you to transcend your own shortcomings and limitations.

Mythologically, you can imagine Ganesha as a cosmic entity. Physically, you can experience him in your own body as the part of the body which takes you from primitive behaviour to rational behaviour, from instinctive behaviour to knowledgeable behaviour, from reactive behaviour to behaviour that is well thought out. In the psychic dimension, he is the guardian of all the *shaktis*, the powers, the feminine energies that are responsible for the creation and formation of life, of the body, of the mind, of sentiments and all other human experiences.

Ganesha is not the guardian of Parvati only. Parvati represents the cosmic Shakti, and this cosmic Shakti manifests in a myriad of forms: in the form of Lakshmi, Saraswati, Indrani or in any other form that you may like to conceive of it. The beauty of Ganesha is that he protects this Shakti and maintains the purity of Shakti, preventing it from being tainted by your ignorance.

Time, matter and memory are three important aspects. In your life, your memory is limited. You say that you have memory of this lifetime, but the memories that you hold of this life are not sharp and clear. You do not have the clear memory of what you did when you were young. Often people cannot even recall what they were doing on this day one year ago, or even remember what they did yesterday. Your memory is short-lived. Ganesha's capacity for remembering indicates that he has the memory of everything since the beginning of time until the present day. He is like the genetic imprint



which contains all the information, right from day one of existence until today. He is the storehouse of knowledge, wisdom and information. Ganesha is the power, the shakti that bridges the gross and the physical with the spiritual and internal. It is a bridge between the two levels of experience, between the two dimensions: the gross and the physical, the psychic and the spiritual.

Another attribute of Ganesha is that he controls every kind of experience that enters the perception of consciousness; I am not using the term 'human perception', I am using the term 'perception of consciousness'. Perception of consciousness has to be understood in the right context. Right now you are aware, you are conscious, but you are not aware of each and every input of your senses. You are not aware of the functions and behaviour of your own mind, yet you consider yourself aware. Ganesha has homogeneous awareness, a total awareness of the past and the present, and therefore he becomes the ruler, the controller of all experiences that occur in the realm of consciousness. Nothing is unknown to him.

Ganesha is also the controller of all the agents that give you either a positive or a negative understanding, knowledge or experience: the divine and the demonical, both. Ganesha controls the demonical and the detrimental forces through strategy, and guides the benevolent forces through logic and deep, internal, intuitive inspiration. After all, when you encounter bad people, when you are surrounded by bad people, what do you do to get yourself out of that situation? You too must be sharp, clear and careful to avoid situations that can be detrimental to you. You have to use strategies to manage the bad which has surrounded you, and that is what Ganesha uses when he has to control the negative hosts, the negative shaktis, the negative powers.

When Ganesha has to deal with the positive, uplifting powers and forces, he uses intuitive, logical awareness and inspiration. When the spiritual aspirant is lifted up from fear and confusion into conscious awareness, then right thought, right speech and right interaction become the trademark of human life. When the right action, right speech and right interaction become the trademark of human expression, then you can say, “Ganesha is my friend.”

Ganesha has been accepted in both of the two major spiritual traditions of India, vedic and tantric. The first reference to Ganesha comes in the *Rig Veda*, in which he is identified as a remover of obstacles.

Overcoming the limiting conditions of existence through Ganesha

The vedic tradition says that there are eight obstacles that hamper human evolution. The first is known as *mada*, or arrogance. The second is known as *abhimana*, or ego. The third is known as *matsarya*, or jealousy and competitiveness. The fourth is known as *moha*, or obsessive infatuation. The fifth is known as *lobha*, or greed. The sixth is known as *krodha*, or anger. The seventh is known as *kama*, or sensual, sensorial and sexual passion. The eighth is known as *mamata*, or attachment. These are the eight pitfalls that hamper the

progress of the human journey in spiritual life. The vedic tradition says that these eight pitfalls must be avoided, and by invoking the grace of Ganesha, you must overcome them.

For each pitfall, a particular aspect of Ganesha has been defined. You have to fight fire with fire. You have to remove a thorn with another sharp object. Similarly, to deal with your anger, you have to invoke the appropriate quality of Ganesha. You cannot just say, “Ganesha, Ganesha, Ganesha.” You must invoke the appropriate quality of Ganesha. In order to overcome passion you have to invoke the right quality of Ganesha. In this manner, to deal with the eight shortcomings or limitations of human life, eight different aspects of Ganesha have been identified. These eight forms of Ganesha are known in the vedic tradition as *Ashta Vinayaka*.

These eight forms of Ganesha can be seen in temples in the western region of India. The form of Ekadanta Ganesha is invoked to eliminate arrogance from life. The form of Dhumravarna Ganesha is invoked to eliminate ego from life. The form of Vakratunda is invoked to remove jealousy and competitiveness. The form of Mahodara is invoked to remove infatuations. The form of Gajanana is invoked to remove greed. The form of Lambodara is invoked to control anger. The form of Vikata is invoked to control passion. The form of Vighnaraja is invoked to control attachment. These are the eight forms or symbols of Ganesha that have been accepted in the vedic tradition, literature and scriptures. All the references to Ganesha in vedic literature define the practices, sadhanas and mantras by which you can overcome the eight detrimental qualities of life. After that, the spiritual journey becomes smooth and fast.

Worshipping Ganesha

Now comes the sadhana and the sequence of the sadhana. The first part of sadhana is known as aradhana, which means worship or invocation. Aradhana is perceived in three different parts. The first is known as *karma kanda*, a physical act to connect yourself. The second part is known as *upasana*

kanda, a mental act to guide your mind, to channel the forces and the powers of your mind. The third part is known as *jnana kanda*, realizing what you have to do, what you are doing and what you have done. These are the three aspects of aradhana, and in the sadhana of Ganesha all these three aspects have to be combined.

Karma kanda: The first aspect, karma kanda, the physical act, is identified as a ritual, something that you do externally, a worship or *pooja*. What are the components of this worship, this pooja? In order to understand any created object or life form, you have to know three things about it: name, form and quality. For example, if you do not know the name 'tree', and you do not know the form of the tree or the quality of the tree, then even if the tree is there, you will not be able to recognize it. If you do not know the name, if you do not experience and realize the form, if you are not aware of the quality contained in the form, then there is no awareness, there is no realization. Each and every object in creation is recognized by name, form and quality. If any one of these is absent, knowledge is incomplete. For knowledge to be complete, these three things must be known. In this context, the name is the mantra, the



form is the image, and the quality is your realization of the inherent powers of that image.

In karma kanda, the ritual aspect, the external act, the image and the name are used. For instance, if you look at a Periodic Table of the elements, you will find the name of an element, either one letter or two letters, and those letters represent the nature and quality of that particular element as well as the name. In the same manner, image also plays a role. When you see an image in front of you, the mind associates, connects and identifies with that image, with that form. Image is used to focus the mental attention. In the absence of mental image, where do you focus? Even when we begin our program, session or class, we have to visualize and create a mental image of something on which we can focus ourselves, such as the candle flame. Ninety-nine point nine percent of you do not even see it, yet you make the effort to create that image of the candle flame in your mind and you connect yourself with it; your mind is held there as long as you are attentive and aware of that symbol. In this manner, the image is used, whatever it may be. We are talking now of Ganesha, but the image can be of Shiva, it can be of Shakti, it can be of Narayana or Lakshmi. In the context of sadhana, it can be anybody. We are speaking specifically of Ganesha, so the image in front of us is that of Ganesha. That image with which you connect yourself has to be honoured, and that connection, that realization, that awareness is honoured by offering the five elements.

What are the five elements that we offer to the image? In any ritual, a flower is offered first. The flower represents the *prithvi* tattwa, the earth element. It is a product of the earth. Earth is insentient, and a flower is also insentient. The goodness of earth, the beauty of the earth, the smell of the earth, the colours of the earth are seen in the flower, and that is what you offer first. The second thing that you offer is water. The sprinkling of water, as is done in havans and in different worships, is the offering of *jala tattwa*, the water element. Third is the element of fire, *agni tattwa*: lighting the

deepak, the jyoti. The image or form is shown that jyoti; that is the offering of fire. The fourth element is air, *vayu tattwa*: the lighting of incense. The fumes of the incense become one with the air molecules and pervade the entire environment with their sweet smell; that represents air. The fifth element is space, the *akasha tattwa*, which is offered through *shabda* or sound. Sound is an attribute of space, therefore mantra becomes the fifth element, representing space. In any worship, in any ritual to any cosmic power, offering of these five items becomes the pooja.

These five items are offered with the *bhavana* or sentiment that 'You are the creator of all this, and I am offering you the best of what you have created.' This sentiment, this bhavana, becomes constant, powerful and strong, provided that you keep on nourishing that sentiment.

Remember, every sentiment develops and grows as you nourish it. Hatred will develop and grow as you nourish hatred, and greed will grow as you nourish greed. Jealousy will grow as you nourish jealousy. You nurture the negative. You feed the negative. Through karma kanda, you nurture the positive, you become aware of the positive and identify with the positive. That is the purpose of rituals. Karma kanda is, therefore, the first part of aradhana, in which the mind connects, identifies and fuses with the symbol, and you offer the best of the five elements to the cosmic power which will, in turn, nourish you.

This principle of karma kanda is also a theory of quantum physics. The theory of quantum physics states that you can pick up anything, a rock from the road, and bring it to your home. That rock has no energy, no power, no shakti. However, every morning you perform pooja to this rock, and in the course of time, you will see the shakti of the rock come alive. That shakti in the rock will respond to you, and according to the power of your invocation, it can give you the benefits of worship. The human mind works in the dimension of energy, and symbols are there to guide the energy flowing from the human mind. That is the first part of aradhana.

Upasana kanda: The second part of aradhana is known as upasana, the mental act, meditation. The mental act of identifying and transforming the nature, quality and behaviour of the mind so there is harmony between your mind and the object of invocation, the quality that you are trying to imbibe, attain and invoke. In this way, meditation becomes part of upasana, and in meditation you go through the sequence of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana.

When you focus the mind on the image, the symbol, that is *pratyahara*. When you have one-pointed awareness of the image, the symbol, and the mind does not deviate from the state of concentration, that is *dharana*. When the mind fuses with the symbol, that is the state of *dhyana*. Ultimately, in this sadhana of Ganesha, one has to come to a state of dhyana through the process of upasana. The initial steps towards dhyana are taken in pratyahara, as here you have to again focus and concentrate on managing the distractions and dissipations of the mind. The way to achieve this is by visualizing the symbol, creating the mental image of that cosmic power at *bhrumadhya* or the eyebrow centre. The mantra is used to access the deeper layers of the human psyche, which are beyond the normal flows of thought currents and emotional currents, which are beyond any desire or expectation and the realm of mental activity. Through japa and meditation you cultivate strong concentration. That strong concentration will give you willpower. That acute and sharp concentration during meditation will help you attain willpower.

Willpower is the concentration of the mental energies and faculties. With concentration and focusing the mind, you are not only learning how to concentrate, but you are also increasing your willpower. Once this willpower develops, you then realize or try to work with the eight pitfalls that hamper the growth of spiritual nature. Visualize the image of Ganesha so that the mind is in harmony with the frequencies of Ganesha. Ganesha is like a tuning fork which vibrates at a certain frequency, and your mind has to tune to that

frequency. Just as you tune your guitar according to the vibrations of the tuning fork, in the same manner, you have to tune your mind according to the vibrations of Ganesha that you are creating within yourself.

Before this process takes place, however, identify one of the shortcomings or pitfalls and work with it for some time, using the right imagery and the right mantra. Be aware, for example, of the level of arrogance. Identify this pitfall through your own reflection, analysis and observation. Be objective about it. Do not try to hide from yourself, and do not try to hide from God. You can hide from other people, but never hide from yourself and never hide in front of God.

There is a story, an anecdote, in which a sadhu called his disciples and gave them one banana each and said, "Find a location where nobody can see you, nobody can observe you, and in that isolated place, eat your banana." One disciple went to his room, locked the room and ate the banana. Another disciple went into the closet, closed the door and ate his banana. The third disciple entered the toilet, closed the door and ate his banana. The fourth searched high and low for an isolated spot and came back to his guru with the banana. The guru looked at all his disciples and said, "You ate your bananas?" Three of them said, "Yes." "Did anybody see you?" "No, nobody saw me." He asked the fourth disciple, "Why do you still have banana in your hand?" "Well, I could not find any place where I was alone. I searched high and low, left and right, but I found God was watching me all the time, so I was never alone and I could not eat my banana, I could not follow your command."

This disciple did not hide from God. The others were trying to hide themselves, just like many of you try to hide what you do from me: "Oh don't tell Swamiji this. He should not know it, he will get angry." That is your imagination; I know what you are doing, and if you challenge me, I will tell you, I will reveal your secrets. Each one of you, I can tell you what you do behind my back. Therefore, be objective in your analysis of yourself, and do not try to justify



your shortcomings with some other excuse, blaming your shortcoming on somebody else. Your shortcoming is your own and nobody has any share in it. Remember that.

When you identify a shortcoming, when you identify a limitation, at that time you invoke the right quality of Ganesha. For arrogance, visualization of the Ekadanta image and the repetition of the mantra belonging to that image of Ganesha must be performed in the right manner, as that mantra is going to change your negative mental energy into a positive power. Arrogance can be changed into a positive power or shakti. Ego can be changed into to a positive shakti. Jealousy and competitiveness can also change into a positive shakti, with which you can excel yourself in everything that you do, and you will not go through failures as you are no longer trying to compete with somebody. In this manner, all of the eight detrimental conditions of human life can be managed.

Jnana kanda: When the upasana is complete and you have managed all these eight conditions, then comes the third aspect of aradhana, which is knowledge, knowing, *jnana*. In *jnana kanda*, right speech, right action and right behaviour become three aspects of your realization, your knowledge. When you are ignorant, you can get away with many wrong things. When you are knowledgeable, you cannot get away with doing anything wrong; you have to pay for the wrong that you do. When there is right speech, when there is right action and when there is right interaction, then shaktis come alive within oneself.

In the *Mahabharata*, there is a story of Yudhishtira, known for his righteousness and truthfulness. During the Mahabharata war, the chariot on which Yudhishtira used to ride every day would travel four inches above the ground. The wheels of his chariot would not touch the ground; the horses' hooves would not touch the ground. That was the power of his *satya*, his truthfulness. That was the shakti of his righteousness. His chariot and the horses pulling it would fly in the air due to his right speech, right action and right interaction. One day he made a mistake; he said an unpleasant truth. His chariot instantly came back to earth. He lost his shakti, his power. Therefore, remember the statement, "To destroy something takes seconds, but to construct something takes months, years and maybe a whole lifetime." What you construct through your continuous and constant effort over a period of time can be destroyed in one second. Do you want that to happen to your aspirations? Do you want that to happen to your attainments?

In the Vedas, it is said that the path of a spiritual aspirant is like walking on a razor's edge. Steadily, carefully, you place your feet on the sharp edge of the razor and walk. If there is a misstep, or if you are not aware, you will cut yourself. It is like tightrope walkers. They are aware of each and every sensory input and movement of the body. While walking the tightrope, they are in total control of and have mastery over each and every function of their body and mind. If they

slip in the mind or in the senses, they will also slip from the rope. You have to see the world and your involvement and participation in the world as walking a tightrope. As long as you walk this tightrope, you must have full control of your senses and mind. Only then will you be able to cross from one side to the other.

This awareness, this control, this virtue has to be cultivated through appropriate and right speech, action, interaction and behaviour. Once these three become the hallmark of your expression then the doors of the chakras open up and Ganesha says, “Now you are ready to enter.” You have overcome the eight enemies of your life, you have gained victory over the eight enemies of life, and now you can enter the dimension of Shakti, and this Shakti will elevate you and take you to the highest point where you will have realization of your true nature. All the doors open up and Ganesha invites you in; he becomes your friend.

This is the aradhana described in the vedic tradition to invoke the grace of Ganesha. The focus of this vedic Ganesha aradhana is to attain mastery and victory over the limiting mental states which create strife, confusion and conflict in life, giving birth to insatiable desires and expectations.



Tantric Ganapati Aradhana

Expanding the Perception of Consciousness

19 August 2012

The divine beings, the divine powers or forces are perceivable in two ways: the unmanifest and the manifest. If I ask you, “What is our unmanifest nature?” you will answer, “Our unmanifest nature is *atman*, the soul.” If I ask you, “What is our manifest nature?” you will say, “It is the body and the senses.” You can see this manifest nature in the physical body and the senses, and you can work with them. However, you cannot perceive your *atman*, your unmanifest nature, yet you know that it is there. You know that *atma* is there, but you do not know its shape, form, quality, nature or character. It is unformed nature, unformed quality, unformed *tattwa*. This existence, this life is formed quality, formed nature, formed *tattwa*.

The same principle applies to the cosmic powers. They can manifest and they can also be unmanifest. When they manifest, they take a form which is known as *sakara*, the visible form which can be looked at, touched and felt: a form similar to our own. A personal identification takes place between me and the form that I observe: ‘I like that form of Ganesha. He is handsome, he is cute, he is poodgie woodgie.’ That is an understanding. That is an appreciation of the form. However, what is his unmanifest form, his non-physical form? What kind of power does he represent in the unmanifest dimension?

In our tradition it has been said that the unmanifest should be visualized as symbols. Just as the manifest nature



is seen in the form of the body, the unmanifest has to be visualized as a symbol. You have seen the image of Shiva: two arms, two legs, matted hair, a serpent around his neck, his body smeared in ash, holding the trident and seated in meditation. That is the manifest form of Shiva. The symbol of the unmanifest Shiva tattwa is the Shivalinga.

Similarly, the symbol of the unmanifest form of Ganesha is the swastika. When this swastika is in movement, it denotes the wheel of life, the cycle of birth and death. When the swastika is static, you see four arms extending from it, which represent the four efforts, the four actions, the four aspirations that every individual has in order to attain the highest experience of peace and bliss. Of these four actions, two are gross and two are spiritual. Artha and kama are gross actions; dharma and moksha are spiritual actions. There are two on one side, dealing with the material existence and the gross life, and two on the other side, dealing with the spiritual existence and the cultivation of divine nature and qualities in life.

Protector of the purity of Shakti

As Ganesha controls the two material and the two spiritual actions and efforts, he becomes the bridge between the gross and the transcendental. He also becomes the protector of Shakti, the cosmic power. That cosmic power is pure and untainted. When you come into this body, the cosmic power also enters the body, and once in the body, it sleeps.

If that cosmic power becomes active within you and begins to interact with the senses and connect with the objective world, it becomes tainted. This inhibits, restricts and limits its force. If you are wearing white clothes and go down into a coal mine, some black smudge will mark your white clothes no matter how careful you are. Therefore, Ganesha has to protect the whiteness of Shakti from being tainted by the influences of the sensorial world. Shakti is dormant, as she is not interacting with the world. She is dormant in your body in the form of kundalini, and she will remain dormant. As long as she remains dormant, you will be moving in this cycle of birth and death. When Shakti awakens, then you can free yourself from this attraction or vortex that the circle creates with its movement, and detach yourself from the influences of birth and death.

The vedic approach to invoke Ganesha is using the power of aradhana, which combines external ritual, mental concentration, identification and attainment of higher knowledge: karma kanda, upasana kanda and jnana kanda. In karma kanda, the rituals are external. In upasana, you go through the process of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana for two reasons: to discover your own mind and nature, and to rectify and eliminate those defects that create barriers in your spiritual growth and progress.

The vedic tradition says, “Live a happy and pious life, a life which is infused with the awareness of the divine.” Your awareness and memories are not divine in nature; rather, they are gross in nature. Your memories link you to your friends, family, expectations and desires. When the memory is not of the gross world, rather there is remembrance of the higher

nature, then that becomes *dhyana*, meditation. As long as you are dealing with memories of the gross nature, you are going through the process of *pratyahara* and *dharana*. The moment remembrance of the divine quality and nature comes in the mind, you move into the meditative state.

In this process, you have to overcome eight difficulties, eight barriers, which are an integral aspect of human life. Arrogance is an integral aspect of your life, ego is an integral aspect, jealousy, attachment, anger, infatuation, greed, sensorial passion, they are all common expressions of normal people who live in the world. However, these expressions hamper the evolution of consciousness and bind you down; they tie you down to the sensorial dimension from which there is no escape. When there is no escape from the sensorial dimension, the statement of Shankaracharya becomes real: *Punarapi jananam punarapi maranam, punarapi janani jathare shayanam* – “Again and again we die; again and again we take birth in the womb of our mother.”

Pratipaksha bhavana: cultivating the opposite sentiment

Extraction from the wheel of life and death, and establishment in the higher nature of consciousness is the role of Ganesha in your life, as well as the modification of the ill or restrictive traits of the personality. In the vedic tradition, specific mantras have been defined for managing and dealing with each of the negative traits. For example:

*Om ekadantaaya vidmahe vakratundaayaa dhimahi tanno
dantih prachodayaat*

This mantra is used to overcome or lessen the state of mental or inner arrogance. If you are arrogant, try the following experiment. Everyone is arrogant, so everybody should try it. Every morning, see the ugly head of your arrogant nature, visualize it in your mind. Those of you who have practised *tattwa shuddhi* will know the idea of *papa purusha*, ‘the sinful man’. Visualize that *papa purusha* in your mind. Visualize that sinful image in your mind and identify that as arrogance,

‘Thy name is arrogance.’ Holding that image of arrogance, repeat this mantra, and with each repetition see the image shrink until it disappears completely. Do this every day for one month. I can assure you that your arrogance will reduce by ten percent, and if you do it continuously, your arrogance will gradually go away.

This is the vedic concept of cultivating pratipaksha bhavana. You may wonder how visualizing something negative in your mind, such as the image of papa purusha, the sinful person, and repeating the mantra can help in overcoming a mental state of arrogance, or ego, or attachment, or jealousy, or infatuation, or anger, or greed, or passion, whatever it may be in these eight categories. You should understand that although you are visualizing the negative, you are focusing on and giving out the positive; the process is creating a condition of mind known as pratipaksha bhavana. *Pratipaksha bhavana* means cultivating the opposite virtue. When you visualize the negative trait, you cultivate the opposite virtue, the benevolent virtue, and that will overpower the negative. This is the idea that the vedic tradition has followed in order to overcome the eight ills of human nature.

The vedic tradition stops at this point: modify your behaviour, become pious, become virtuous, lead the divine life. As Sri Swami Sivananda, says, “The purpose of Vedanta is to teach you how to live a divine life,” and divine life is to live the higher qualities in this gross, physical, material dimension.

Tantric tools to propitiate Ganesha

The meaning of *tantra* is expansion of consciousness and liberation of energy. The vedic tradition reaches the level of modification: modifying and managing the negative, and cultivating and living the positive. Tantra goes one step further. You are already living the positive, you have overcome the negative traits, and now you want to explore your nature. You want to expand your perceptions so that they are not confined to the senses only; rather, they can become part of a universal experience and a universal realization.

With this view, tantra further identifies the shortcomings that are deeper than the eight enemies that you have overcome by following the aradhana of the vedic tradition. Tantra says that there are four more smugglers living in this body and mind. ‘Smuggler’ is an apt term, as they smuggle away peace, happiness and contentment, and bring strife, discord and confusion. These four smugglers within you are the basic instincts: craving, fear, sexuality and sleep. These are the four areas in which tantra begins to work after you have completed the first part of the journey by following the vedic path and process. In order to deal with the subtler and more potent pulls and attractions and repulsions within human nature, tantra has evolved another set of Ganesha imagery. There is one work of literature called *Mudgal Purana*, in which thirty-two tantric forms of Ganesha have been described. Each tantric form of Ganesha deals with overcoming a specific negative trait of human nature. Broadly speaking, the physical, mental and emotional desires and cravings can be managed through the invocation of *Bala Ganapati*, the young Ganapati. There is a whole symbology associated with him. Even the way his feet are placed, whether the right leg is up or the left leg is up, has a meaning. If the trunk goes to the right it means something, if it is to the left it means something different again. Whether the hand is like this or like that, it is a symbol and you have to know what it means. You have to identify and recognize that meaning, nature and quality.

In this manner, each image of Ganesha conveys a path that a tantric can take to improve a particular trait of his nature. Just as cravings can be overcome through the invocation of Bala Ganapati, sleep, fear and negative sexuality can also be overcome by invoking the appropriate aspects of Ganesha. For example, negative sexuality can be overcome by invoking Uchchishtha Ganapati and fear can be overcome by invoking Vikata Ganapati. There are also different mantras, different Ganesha Gayatris for each of these different forms, as well as various yantras.



Mantra and yantra go together, as it is the mantra that creates the yantra. There is a particular machine called tonoscope. If you stand in front of it and say a word, that word will create an image. People experimented with *Om*, chanting the mantra *Om* in front of the tonoscope, and the image that appeared on the screen was that of a Sri Yantra. When you chant *Om* the Sri Yantra appears. You may wonder how this happens, as the Sri Yantra is the symbol of Shakti and *Om* is the universal cosmic sound. According to common understanding, *Om* is the vedic mantra and *Hrim* is the tantric mantra; however, both mean the same thing. When you chant *Om*, the same purpose is fulfilled as when you chant the mantra *Hrim*. The vedic tradition says *Om*, the tantric tradition says *Hrim*. *Hrim* is the mantra of Shakti, and *Om* is the primordial sound representing creation which pervades the entire universe. *Om* is the first emanation of the Shakti tattwa in space. In this way, mantras create an impression, an image in the mind, which is known as a *yantra*.

Once, while travelling through Singapore I visited a museum where they had this tonoscope. I had read about

the experiment in which the mantra *Om* was chanted and the image of the Sri Yantra appeared on the screen, so I was curious. In front of that machine I chanted *Om* and saw the triangles of Sri Yantra forming with the vibrations of *Om*. Therefore, I have no reason to disbelieve what was stated by the researchers. I then experimented with some other mantras, such as the Gayatri mantra and the beeja mantras, for ten to fifteen minutes. During this process of experimenting with the machine, I chanted the beeja mantra of Ganesha and the Ganesha yantra began to form on the screen. At that time I did not understand what all this meant; however, today I do realize that when we chant a mantra, no matter what it is, whether it is *Om* or the Mahamrityunjaya or Gayatri mantra, energy lines, pranic flows, are created in the mind. Prana flows throughout the body, and when the channels are open and prana is flowing through those channels, the circuit of prana becomes a yantra. Therefore, the body experiences the power of the mantra as well. The body and mind together experience the power of the mantra.

Initially, the power of mantra is felt in a gross way, through the body. With the chanting of mantra you feel yourself relaxing. You feel your nervous agitations relaxing and a state of peace pervading. These are just the first physical experiences. Simultaneously, a subtle effect is also taking place in your consciousness and the yantra is being created. You are not aware of it, but when you chant *Om* with total awareness, you actually create a pranic yantra within yourself. The field of the yantra surrounds the whole body, nourishes the whole body, energizes the whole body and protects the whole body.

It was this experience that I had in Mount Kailash. When we all chanted the Kavacham of Shiva, we were all protected by the energy created by that mantra, and what a protection! Even accidents could not make a single scratch on the human body; there was absolute protection. Of course, you need to perfect the sadhana. What happened to me may not happen to you, or it may never again happen to me either.

It may not happen to you as you are not focused, you are not able to see and connect yourself with that energy spectrum within you. In those who can, the yantra comes alive. This is the concept that tantra clarifies. Mantra and yantra both become aids for overcoming the limiting conditions of life, body, mind and senses, and for establishing oneself in higher nature.

Ganesha aradhana

Each symbol of Ganesha indicates a process in the unfolding of human potential, the unfolding that leads you to material prosperity as well as spiritual prosperity. Amongst the thirty-two symbols or forms of Ganesha, some are benign and some are fearful, some are sexual in nature and some are pleasant. This imagery does not indicate that Ganesha is tantric. That is a question for intellectual debate and intellectual debate never opens the doors of reality. The doors of reality open with human experience and not with intellectual debates, and tantra emphasizes human experience.

There is one image of Ganesha called Shakti Ganapati, in which his consorts are sitting naked on his lap. There is the image of Uchchishtha Ganapati, in which Ganesha and his consort are in sexual union. There is the image of Brahmachari Ganapati, in which he is pure and untainted. In this manner, thirty-two images of Ganesha have been identified by the tantras with the purpose that meditation on these images and the corresponding mantras and yantras will bring about a qualitative change in life and overcome all those limiting conditions which hold you to this material dimension. They will free you from all those bonds which hold you down so that you can elevate yourself. This is the tantric process.

Havan, or fire ceremony, is a tantric process as well as a vedic process; it is common in both, as are the mantras and yantras. The difference between the two is that in the vedic tradition you are dealing with modification of the worldly nature to live a healthy, happy and full life, and in the tantric

tradition you are realizing and exploding the dormant dimensions of your consciousness.

Meditation plays an important role in the tantras, as it is the process by which you can isolate yourself from the influences of the sensorial and the objective world. By disconnecting yourself, you can immerse your awareness in the inner discovery, the inner journey. Once you have overcome the four basic instincts through Ganesha upasana then the doors of spiritual life open up, and here the form of Ganesha becomes Pranava Ganapati or Om Ganapati. You might have seen some images of Ganesha that are made by the word *Om*; the entire image of Ganesha is made by the symbol of *Om*. That is the esoteric image of Pranava Ganapati, Om Ganapati.

In the highest sadhana of tantra, the three mantras that make up the mantra *Om* are used: *A*, *U* and *M*. The combination of these three sounds becomes *Om*. When you dissect *Om*, it becomes *A-U-M*, and in the sadhana of Pranava Ganapati, the *A-U-M* mantras are used to access the causal dimension of existence. The gross is accessed through the vedic tradition; the mental dimension is accessed through the tantric tradition; and the causal dimension is accessed through Pranava Ganapati sadhana, as upon completion you identify with the Shiva tattwa, the Shiva nature. Ganesha brings you to Shiva, and *Om* is the symbol of Shiva. Ganesha belongs to the same family as Shiva, and Ganesha is also the master of sounds, of mantras. This highest Pranava Ganapati sadhana is taught only by a guru to a qualified and competent disciple.

Ganesha's help in perfecting discipleship

Remember that discipleship has to first be perfect to perfect the vedic sadhana, or the tantric sadhana, or the attainment of spiritual life. The foundations of discipleship are faith and trust in the guru. That is difficult, as people get too caught up in their own ideas about surrender, faith and trust. They become too unrealistic when they talk of surrender, faith,

or trust. There is an identity crisis in their life. First, deal with that identity crisis before becoming a disciple, and then become a competent sadhaka; become a competent disciple, so that the high energy can flow through you and you can become an enlightened being.

Eight attainments of Ganapati aradhana

When Ganesha is pleased with you, the feeling of love and compassion in the immediate family, along with cooperation, coordination, sympathy, respect and obedience, will come in. That is the immediate effect of Ganesha in your personal life, and in the lives of your immediate family members. The second effect of Ganesha reaches out to the extended family: your relatives, neighbours and friends. In relation to them, understanding, cooperation, sympathy and friendship will increase and predominate in your behaviour. With the third effect of Ganesha, this love extends to all the people with whom one interacts in the world, including business associates, and people at large. The feeling of that love, affection, sympathy and compassion will extend to everybody.

Love is the first attainment of invoking Ganesha. The second attainment is betterment of buddhi. Betterment of buddhi leads to the third attainment, greater understanding, and as the result of the first three, the mind becomes creative and intuitive. When the mind becomes creative and intuitive, it follows the path of *dharma*, righteous action, behaviour and understanding. This is the fourth attainment. Love and dharma together conquer karma. Being able to overcome your karmas is the fifth attainment. These are the five attainments of a sadhaka who is living in the material world.

The sixth attainment is related to raja yoga and kundalini yoga. This is the domain of sannyasins and spiritual sadhakas. It is not the domain of householders who wish to experience peace and bliss; rather, it is the domain of sannyasins and sadhakas who want to cultivate higher awareness and awaken the kundalini. Therefore, the sixth, seventh and eighth stages, the final three, are the domain of sadhakas. The



awakening of kundalini, the raising of kundalini and the merger of Shakti with Shiva are the three different stages.

According to kundalini yoga, kundalini has to be properly controlled and guided. If that power is not channelled, its effect can be negative. If it is not channelled, you can become the biggest criminal in the world, and if it is channelled, you can become the greatest saint in the world. Dams are created to control the flow of water. If you open all the sluice gates and the water rushes out, inundation and flooding will take place, houses will be destroyed. That is the negative aspect of kundalini awakening, which can occur if you do not know how to control the opening and closing of the sluice gates. Therefore, it is said that the awakening of kundalini has to be done in a proper manner; open the right gate, the right amount, at the right time, and allow the water to flow.

Value of innocence

Whatever you do, whatever sadhana you undertake or effort that you make, one thing stands out as the primary mover in your life, and that is your innocent belief. This is a quality that no one has. As nobody has it, all the sages and seers have said to cultivate this quality. Christ said, "In order to

enter the Kingdom of Heaven, be innocent like a child.” It is this innocent belief that becomes the trademark of a spiritual aspirant. Not logic, not buddhi, not reflection; they are used as stepping stones to come to this point of innocent belief. Sri Aurobindo said, “In the beginning the intellect was my friend and now it has become the greatest barrier of my life.” That statement holds true for each and every one of you. You go through a lot of intellectual gymnastics, and the intellect becomes a barrier. Therefore, the cultivation of innocent belief is primary for every spiritual aspirant. When the innocence is there, Ganesha does manifest. When the innocence is there, the divine powers come down to help you.

There is a story of a little boy who used to live in a tiny hamlet in the middle of the forest. Across the forest there was a slightly bigger village with a school. When the boy grew up, his mother took him there and registered his name in the school. Every morning, before sunrise, the boy had to walk from his home across the forest to go to the school in the other village, and in the evening he would leave school, cross the dark and mysterious forest and return home. The boy was only about eleven years old and he had to walk along this track alone. He used to feel frightened. He was afraid of all the noises and sounds of the jungle.

One day, he told his mother, “Mother, I go to school every day, and in the process I have to pass through this forest and I feel fearful. I am afraid of going alone.” His mother said to him, “Why don’t you call your big brother? He will hold your hand and take you to your school.” The boy said, “Do I have a big brother?” His mother said, “Yes, you have a big brother.” The boy asked, “But why have I not seen him all this time?” “Because your big brother lives in the forest and tends the cows day and night. He doesn’t have the time to come home. That is why until today you have not seen him.” “What is the name of my big brother?” asked the boy. His mother replied, “His name is Gopala.” “And will he come if I call out to him?” His mother said, “Yes, he will come. If you believe in him, he will come to you.”

The next morning, when the boy was afraid walking alone through the forest, he called out, "Brother Gopala! Brother Gopala! I am afraid. Where are you? Come and take me to school." Nothing happened. Again in his desperation he called out, "Brother Gopala, brother Gopala! Where are you? I am frightened!" Nothing happened. Again, a third time in desperation, he called out, "Brother Gopala, why are you ignoring me? Why are you not coming to me?" Suddenly, this little boy heard the music of a flute and, from behind a tree, out came a young boy of about fifteen years of age, with a turban on his head and a peacock feather sticking out of the turban, holding a flute in his hand. The boy said, "I am your big brother Gopala. Why are you afraid when I am here? I am sorry for not having seen you earlier, as I have been busy tending my cows, but come, I will take you to your school." He took the little boy to the school and brought him back every single day from then onwards.

One day, the headmaster of the school informed all the students, "Tomorrow we will have a special celebration and I want each student to bring one glass of milk." The little boy went home and told his mother, "Mother, tomorrow I have to take a glass of milk to school. The principal has given this order." His mother said, "My son, there is nothing in this house that I can give you. Not even a drop of milk." The boy said, "Mother, can I ask my brother for some milk? He tends cows, why can't we ask him?" His mother thought that the child was going through childhood fantasies and imaginings, and so she said, "All right, ask him. Let us see if he gives you something or not."

The next day, the boy called out to his brother Gopala, "Brother Gopala, brother Gopala, come!" Gopala came before him. The little boy said, "You know, today I have to take some milk to school." Gopala said, "Listen, I have distributed all the milk and the only milk that I have left over is in this tiny little cup." There was maybe one sip of milk in the cup. Gopala said, "You take this to your teacher." The little boy believed, and took the tiny little cup and went to

the principal. The principal looked at him and said, "What have you brought?" The boy said, "Whatever milk my brother gave me, I have brought you that." The teacher looked at the table, upon which there were big tumblers and glasses filled with milk, and he got irritated. He said, "What is this? This is no milk!" He hit the little boy's hand and the cup fell out of his hands. When it fell on the ground, a continuous stream of milk started coming out of it. The little drop became a big pool. When he saw this miracle, the teacher said, "Who gave you this tumbler of milk? The milk has not stopped flowing. It has become a big pool. A stream of milk!" The boy said, "My brother Gopala gave me this milk." "Where does this brother Gopala of yours live?" asked the teacher. "In the forest," replied the boy. "Can you show him to me?" The little boy said, "Yes, come with me. He will definitely see you."

The little boy and the teacher went together into the forest, and the boy called out, "Brother Gopala, Brother Gopala, come! The teacher wants to see you." Nobody came. Again he called out, "Brother Gopala, if you don't come, the teacher is not going to believe in me. Please come." And there he saw this blue-hued boy coming along the track, smiling a bewitching smile. The boy told the teacher, "Look, look! My brother is coming. Isn't he beautiful?" The teacher looked and said, "I can't see anybody there." The boy said, "But he is standing in front of us. Look at him. He is looking at you. He is smiling." The teacher said, "There is nobody here." The little boy asked his brother, "Why can't the teacher see you?" Brother Gopala said, "Because the teacher does not believe." The little boy said, "But he is not ever going to trust me again; he is not ever going to believe in me again. Please show yourself to him." Gopala said, "No. Not until he believes. But, because of your request, I will play my flute." Krishna played a tune on his flute, and the teacher heard the music and fell down at the feet of this little boy. Through his innocent belief the little boy actually materialized Krishna in front of him.

This tale of a little boy's belief concludes the topic of Ganapati tantra and illustrates that ultimately, it is innocent

belief that becomes the trademark of a spiritual aspirant. No siddhi, no power, no expectation, no grandness, no greatness, just innocent belief. When you are able to cultivate this innocent belief, then you can say, “Ganesha is my eternal friend.”

Hari Om Tat Sat



Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



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The Yogadrishti (Yogavision) series of satsangs consists of discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati in Munger as part of the new phase of sannyasa life that he has embarked upon since 2009.

The theme of the satsangs Swamiji gave in August 2012 at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yoga Peeth was Ganapati aradhana. Swamiji took us on a journey to the land of Ganesha's birth, Mt Kailash, and explained the significance of this well-loved deity's birth, form and the associated symbols. Swamiji also outlined the role of Ganesha in human life and the methods to invoke his grace, as described in the vedic and tantric systems.



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